



Preparing for Parenthood?

Do your Homework now for peaceful nights later?

Becoming a parent for the very first time, or second or third for that matter, is a life-changing event. There's a widely held belief that sleep deprivation comes with the territory. We've all heard of the jokes, sighs and sympathetic nods that follow the announcement you're expecting. But it doesn't have to be that way...

Most parents-to-be are surprised by the fact that babies need 16-18 hours of sleep a day. It's not normal for a baby to cry or be awake for long periods of time. When babies are asleep their brain is doing a huge amount of growth and development, making sense of the experiences they've had. So why are a lot of babies waking up or crying? It's because they're overtired. The more overtired they are, the less they sleep and the more they cry.

Parents usually get to the six-week mark, where Dad has to return to work and they're juggling the feeds and catching sleep in between before they realise they can't keep this routine up or they'll go crazy! These parents are now looking for solutions to sleep problems or how to deal with a crying baby. At this point it's much harder to fix the problem because a behaviour pattern has been established.

The best way to have a baby who sleeps well is to educate yourself before your baby arrives so you know how to establish a good sleep routine in the first few weeks. All expectant parents need to understand sleeping cues, signs of tiredness and how to establish day and night routines. However, the focus is so often on the birth and getting the nursery ready that too little emphasis is placed on what to do with your baby when you bring him or her home.

If you have a friend or family member who is having a baby the best way you can help is to encourage them to find out information about topics such as sleep routines so they're better prepared to be a parent. Be warned though, not all books are on track. Just because it's in a book doesn't mean it is right. I have always found that parents who take the time to become educated reap the benefits for months to come while those who don't find sleep becomes a precious commodity for the whole family.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Psychologist and parent Nicole Pierotti is a baby sleep and parenting expert. To find out about her baby preparation workshops for expectant parents, call 4725 4699 or visit www.babysmiles.com.au.